



# Washington State House of Representatives

## Code of Conduct

### Preamble

The Washington State House of Representatives Code of Conduct is essential to achieving the mission of the House of Representatives to, as stewards of the public trust, establish laws and policies guided by our state Constitution. The Code of Conduct also aligns with the following institutional goals:

---

"(1) INCREASE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION, UNDERSTANDING, AND TRANSPARENCY OF THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS;

(2) ENACT HIGH QUALITY LEGISLATION THROUGH DEBATE AND COLLABORATION THAT IS THOUGHTFUL AND RESPONSIVE, AND HONORS OUR DIVERSE CITIZENRY;

(3) CONTINUOUSLY EVALUATE AND IMPROVE THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF ALL LEGISLATIVE OPERATIONS;

(4) RECRUIT AND RETAIN HIGHLY MOTIVATED, COMPETENT, AND CREATIVE STAFF;

(5) INVEST IN MEMBER AND STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT; AND

(6) MAINTAIN AND ENFORCE THE HIGHEST ETHICAL STANDARDS IN AN IMPARTIAL AND CONSISTENT MANNER."

---

**It is therefore the intent of the House that the expectations of the Code of Conduct shall:**

- Embody the commitment of the House to maintain an environment where all people are treated, and are expected to treat others, with dignity and respect;
- Apply equally and at all times to each individual participating in the legislative community and engaging in the business of the House, both on and off the Capitol Campus;
- Continually reaffirm the mission, vision, and goals adopted by the House;
- Serve as a complement to other rules, policies, and procedures instituted by the House; and
- Be subject to regular review and any necessary revision.

### Definitions

1. **Legislative Community:** The legislative community is the community of individuals who participate in the business of the House of Representatives to enact high quality legislation through debate and collaboration. Members of the legislative community of the House include but are not limited to:
  - Legislators and other elected officials;
  - Regular and temporary employees of the House;
  - Lobbyists;
  - State agency and other non-legislative government employees;
  - Members of the press; and
  - Members of the public.

2. **Discrimination:** The House prohibits discrimination or harassment based on a person's race, creed, color, national origin, gender, gender expression or identity, sexual orientation, religion, marital status, family status, pregnancy, military or veteran status, age, genetic status, and/or physical, mental, or sensory disability, use of a service animal, and any other status protected by federal, state, or local law.
3. **Harassment:** Harassment is conduct that is unwelcome and on the basis of a person's protected status. Harassment itself can take many forms. It can include:
  - Comments, jokes, innuendoes, questions, stories, conversations, cartoons, or pranks;
  - Physical, mental, and emotional intimidation, touching, ostracizing, or blocking or impeding someone's freedom of movement; or
  - Slurs, epithets, or displayed symbols.
4. **Sexual Harassment:** Sexual harassment occurs when harassment is sexual in nature or is gender-based. Sexual harassment includes but is not limited to:
  - Unsolicited and unwelcome sexual advances or propositions;
  - Requests for "dates" or other social encounters that may be inappropriate because of past rejections, power dynamics, or other circumstances;
  - Comments about a person's appearance of a sexual or suggestive nature or at unacceptable times or frequency;
  - Unwelcome or unacceptable conduct such as touching or invasions of personal space; or
  - Repeated and unwelcome electronic communication of a sexual, suggestive, or personal nature.
5. **Bullying:** Bullying is repeated and unreasonable actions of one or more persons that are threatening, humiliating, degrading, or intimidating. Bullying can take many forms and may include physical intimidation, isolation, verbal abuse, undermining, sabotage, unreasonable work expectations, or psychological mistreatment such as gaslighting, humiliating, manipulating, or instilling fear. "Gaslight" means to manipulate an individual or members of a group into questioning their own memory, perception, or sanity.
6. **Respectful Workplace Policy:** The Respectful Workplace Policy incorporates the House's internal personnel policies and procedures with regard to discrimination, harassment, and abusive behavior or bullying in the workplace. "Personnel" includes both employees and elected members of the House.

## Code of Conduct

As stewards of the public trust, the House of Representatives is committed to maintaining an environment that upholds the values of diversity, inclusivity, decorum, safety, and public service. Each member of the legislative community of the House is therefore expected to:

- *Conduct themselves with self-awareness, self-respect, and professionalism;*
- *Treat all others with respect, dignity, and civility, regardless of status or position; and*
- *Refrain from engaging in hostile, intimidating, offensive, and possibly unlawful activities or behaviors which amount to discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, or bullying.*

## Violations of the Code of Conduct

Each member of the legislative community is responsible for their own conduct. However, victims of and bystanders to any violation of the Code of Conduct are highly encouraged to report the violation to their supervisor, the Chief Clerk, House Counsel, or any third party contracted or retained by the House for the purpose of receiving complaints from, or providing support to, members of the legislative community.

Beginning July 1, 2019, pending the passage of enabling legislation, the Independent Resource Office (IR Office) will also be available to those wishing to file a complaint or seeking confidential support, guidance, advice, or assistance. Contacting the IR Office is not a prerequisite to using any existing formal or informal process instituted by the House.

The House seeks to address any complaints in a manner that is apolitical, impartial, transparent, prompt, thorough, and respectful. Reported violations of the Code of Conduct will be investigated in accordance with the rules, policies, and procedures instituted by the House, including those of the Respectful Workplace Policy, and by the IR Office. No person will be granted special privilege or immunity from consequences of violating the Code of Conduct on the basis of their status or position in the legislative community.

Retaliation or threats of retaliation will not be tolerated against any person who complains of or reports discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, or other violations of the Code of Conduct. The House may take disciplinary action against a person who retaliates or threatens retaliatory action.

All supervisors and House members have a responsibility to take employee concerns and complaints seriously and to protect employees from behaviors that violate this Code of Conduct and the Respectful Workplace Policy. In the case of harassment or other discriminatory behavior, a supervisor must promptly report any allegations to the Chief Clerk or House Counsel. The House will investigate all such allegations. For more information regarding employee complaints, please refer to the Respectful Workplace Policy.

## Resources

In addition to the resources offered by the House and the IR Office, individuals may also wish to seek information or assistance from the following:

- Employee Assistance Program;
- Legislative Ethics Board;
- Washington State Human Rights Commission;
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission;
- Dispute Resolution Center of Thurston County;
- SafePlace;
- Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs; and
- Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network.

## Acknowledgement

I affirm that I have read the House of Representatives Code of Conduct. I understand the conduct and behavior expected of me as a member of the legislative community.

---

*Signature*

*Date Signed*